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Navy Personnel Research and Development Center

San Diego, CA 92162-6800 TN 89-25 June 1989



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Officer Career Development: Fleet Perceptions of the Aviation Duty Officer Program

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June 1989

**Officer Career Development:
Fleet Perceptions of the Aviation Duty Officer Program**

Reginald A. Bruce, Ph.D.

Reviewed by
Robert F. Morrison, Ph.D.

Approved and released by
John J. Pass, Ph.D.
Director, Personnel Systems Department



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Availability Codes		
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A-1		

Navy Personnel Research and Development Center
San Diego, California 92152-6800

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION / DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) NPRDC TN 89-25		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Navy Personnel Research and Development Center	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) Code 12	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) San Diego, California 92152-6800		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING ORGANIZATION Office of Naval Research	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Washington, DC 22217-5000		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO 62233N	PROJECT NO RM33M20
		TASK NO .06	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Officer Career Development: Fleet Perceptions of the Aviation Duty Officer Program			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Final	13b. TIME COVERED FROM Dec 86 TO Dec 87	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1989 June	15. PAGE COUNT 30
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION			
17. COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
05	09		
		Pilot retention, career development, career policy	
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)			
<p>This report is one of a series examining officer career development. In response to the ever-growing shortage of pilots, the Aviation Duty Officer community was created. This officer designation was designed for pilots who have demonstrated outstanding aviation skills and who wish to remain in flying-related billets throughout their careers. The purpose of this report was to help policy makers assess fleet acceptance of the new community. Questionnaire data from pilots (N=2,353) were analyzed to answer specific questions regarding fleet perceptions. In general, an ADO-type career was acceptable to 49 percent of the pilots. However, only 12 percent of our sample find the ADO program acceptable when taking into account the lack of squadron command opportunity. Recommendations were presented regarding how to improve fleet acceptance of the ADO program.</p>			
20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Reginald A. Bruce, Ph.D.		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (619) 553-7658	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL Code 12

FOREWORD

1. This effort was conducted within program element 62233N (Mission Support Technology), project RM33M20 (Manpower and Personnel Technology), task RM33M20.06 (Career and Occupational Design). The purpose of the work unit is to develop prototype models of unrestricted line (URL) officer career decisions that can be used to assess the impact of present and proposed URL career policy and practices upon those decisions and the officers' career activities.

2. This is the twelfth report completed within this program element and work unit number under the sponsorship of the Chief of Naval Research (ONR-222). This present report is intended to provide feedback to Navy policy makers on the perceptions of aviators toward the Aviation Duty Officer program.

3. Point of contact at NAVPERSRANDCEN is Dr. Reginald A. Bruce. AUTOVON 553-7658 or Commercial (619) 553-7658. Comments are welcome.

JOHN J. PASS

Director, Personnel Systems Department

Prior PDCD Publications:

1. Cook, T.M., & Morrison, R.F. (1982, August). Surface warfare junior officer retention: Early career development factors (NPRDC TR 82-59). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

2. Cook, T.M., & Morrison, R.F. (1983, January). Surface warfare junior officer retention: Background and first sea tour factors as predictors of continuance beyond obligated service (NPRDC TR 83-6). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

3. Morrison, R.F. (1983, July). Officer career development: Surface warfare officer interviews (NPRDC TN 83-11). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

4. Morrison, R.F., Martinez, C., & Townsend, F.W. (1984, March). Officer career development: Description of aviation assignment decisions in the antisubmarine warfare (ASW) patrol community (NPRDC TR 84-31). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

5. University of San Diego (1984, October 23-25). Proceedings: Volume 1. Group reports. Tri-service career research workshop. San Diego, CA: Continuing Education, University of San Diego.

6. Morrison, R.F., & Cook, T.M. (1985, February). Military officer career development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (NPRDC TN 85-4). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

7. Wilcove, G.L., Bruni, J.R., & Morrison, R.F. (1987, August). Officer Career development: Reactions of two unrestricted line communities to detailers (NPRDC TN 87-40). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.
8. Morrison, R.F. (1988, March). Officer career development: URL officers in joint- duty assignments (NPRDC TN 88-26). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.
9. Wilcove, G.L. (Ed.) (1988, August). Officer career development: Problems of three unrestricted line communities (NPRDC TR 88-13). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.
10. Wilcove, G.L. (1988, September). Officer career development: General unrestricted line officer perceptions of the dual-career track (NPRDC TN 88-62). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.
11. Bruni, J.R. and Wilcove, G.L. (1989, January). Officer Career Development: Preliminary surface warfare officer perceptions of a major career path change (NPRDC TN 89-5). San Diego, CA: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

SUMMARY

Problem

The present pilot shortage has led to difficulties for the Navy Military Personnel Command, Aviation Officer Distribution Division (NMPC-431) in maintaining squadron manning levels and in meeting billet fill requirements for post-graduate education assignments and other shore assignments. In response to this problem, the Secretary of the Navy established the Aviation Duty Officer (ADO) Restricted Line community. The ADO Program was designed for pilots who have demonstrated outstanding aviation skills and who wish to remain in flying-related billets throughout their careers.

Objective

The objective of this study is to provide feedback from the fleet that will help policy makers (OP-130E2, OP-136D, and OP-591) and career managers (NMPC-43) to improve their understanding of pilots' attitudes toward this recently created retention effort.

Procedure

Questionnaires were mailed to a large sample of pilots (commissioning years 1961 to 1985). These data were collected as part of a larger study on unrestricted line officer career development. For purposes of this study, data from 2,353 pilots were analyzed. Questionnaire items measured general interest in an ADO-type program and the attractiveness of specific elements of the ADO career path. Analyses were conducted to discern factors related to high or low interest in this new community.

Findings

1. Pilots were strongly divided on the attractiveness of an all-flying career. Almost one-fourth of the sample had a very low interest and one-fourth of the sample had a very high interest in such a career. This suggests that the notion of an ADO-type program is fairly controversial with the fleet and at the same time an issue that evokes strong emotions.
2. In general, an ADO-type career was attractive to 49 percent of the pilots in our sample. However, when the opportunity to command a squadron was eliminated, only 12 percent of the pilots found such a career path attractive.
3. There was a strong effect due to officer grade. Senior officers responded less favorably toward this new program. Though not conclusive, these data indicate that as pilots (that remain in the Navy) become lieutenant commanders they gain additional leadership responsibilities and their career interests expand beyond only flying. The data do not strongly indicate that those pilots who only want to fly leave the Navy.
4. While pilots in all aviation subcommunities expressed a general interest in an ADO-type program, those in fleet support squadrons tended to be slightly more interested. On the other hand, pilots in attack and fighter squadrons were the least attracted to the ADO program. Attack and fighter pilots did not want to change from their current planes or missions.
5. Naval flight officers (NFOs) were less attracted to the new community than were pilots. At the present time, however, there does not appear to be an ADO-type program in plans for NFOs.

6. Less promotable pilots (based on Fitness Report evaluations) had a greater interest in the ADO program than did higher-rated officers. However, the percentage of those passed over for promotion to the next highest grade in the ADO community is not appreciably different from that in the aviation community in general. Thus, although less promotable officers are more interested in the ADO community, the designation transfer board has done well in maintaining the quality of officers selected as ADOs.

7. A number of additional factors tend to distinguish the officer with a very high interest in the ADO program from the officer with a very low interest in becoming an ADO. Specifically, those interested in transferring to the ADO community: (a) are more likely to be from Reserve commissioning sources (AOCS, NROTC contract), (b) are less satisfied with their present aircraft, (c) are less likely to be seeking command of a squadron, (d) find the prospect of Washington, D.C. headquarters tours more unattractive, and (e) have a greater desire to strive for geographic stability.

Recommendations

It is recommended that OP-130E2 and OP-591:

1. Develop additional leadership responsibilities for ADOs in lieu of actual command opportunities.
2. Build in assurances to fighter and attack pilots that within the ADO program they can remain in duty involving flying (DIFOPS) billets with their present aircraft.
3. Define the overarching mission of this career path and its targeted population.
4. Clarify how the ADO community meshes with the rest of naval aviation.
5. Communicate the opportunities and limitations of the ADO program throughout the aviation community.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Since fiscal year 1982 the Navy has been confronted with slipping pilot retention. This has been felt particularly in the carrier-based aviation communities. The pilot shortage has led to difficulties for the Navy Military Personnel Command, Aviation Officer Distribution Division (NMPC-43) in maintaining squadron manning levels and in meeting billet fill requirements for post-graduate education assignments and other shore assignments. In addition, it has been suggested that because more pilots are leaving, many to commercial airlines, the resulting decline in pilot experience has increased the risk of aircraft mishaps.¹ The standard "party line" and O-club talk about why Navy aviators are resigning is partly that they are being asked to do too many things other than fly. In response to this problem, the Secretary of the Navy established the Aviation Duty Officer (ADO) Restricted Line community (154X) in April 1986. The ADO Program was designed for pilots who have demonstrated outstanding aviation skills and who wish to remain in flying-related billets throughout their careers. The ADO program recognizes that the traditional 131X career path, consisting of flying billets interspersed with staff, educational, and command tours, might not meet the career objectives of those pilots who want to concentrate on flying.

Community Description

The ADO Program establishes a restricted line community designation that the typical 131X pilot may request when within 9 months of completing minimum service requirement (MSR). Thus, any pilot who has completed obligated service may request transfer to the ADO designation. Furthermore, 131X officers who have separated from active duty may request recall as ADOs. Finally, all permanent Limited Duty Officers are eligible to request redesignation to 154X. Selection to the ADO designation occurs through regularly scheduled selection boards (twice yearly). The first ADO selection board convened in November 1986.

The intent of the ADO program is to assign ADOs exclusively to Duty Involving Operational Flying (DIFOPS) billets with standard sea/shore tour rotations. ADOs are not eligible for staff tours, Washington, DC headquarters tours, or educational billets (e.g., the Navy Postgraduate School). In addition, ADOs are not eligible for assignments as executive or commanding officers. It appears that most ADO billets are being written for force support squadrons and the Naval Air Training Command, albeit it is also true that some ADOs have been assigned to fleet readiness squadrons and fleet squadrons.

The promotion opportunity for ADOs to O-5 is similar to that for other restricted line communities. Promotion opportunity to O-6, however, is less than that for other restricted or unrestricted line communities. Furthermore, ADOs are not eligible for flag grade. Finally, like 131X officers, ADOs are eligible to receive Aviation Officer Continuation Pay.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide feedback from the fleet to OP-130E2, OP-136D, OP-591, and NMPC-43 to improve understanding of pilots' attitudes toward this recently created retention effort.

¹Source: OP-130E2.

METHOD

Sample

For purposes of this study, data from 2,353 pilots were analyzed. The pilots are from commissioning years 1961 to 1985 and adequately represent the major subcommunities within aviation. The data were extracted from a survey on aviation officer career development that 3,755 naval aviators (NFOs and pilots) responded to during August 1986. This survey was part of a larger project evaluating unrestricted line officer career development.² Table 1 provides a further description of the sample of pilots whose opinions were analyzed.

Table 1
Sample Description (131X, 139X)

Grade	Sample		August 1986 Population	
	N	%	N	%
ENS	150	6	2,661	22
LTJG	278	12	1,516	13
LT	634	27	3,515	30
LCDR	597	25	2,021	17
CDR	589	25	1,539	13
CAPT	105	5	558	5
	N = 2,353		N = 11,810	

Aviation Subcommunities Represented in Sample

	(N)	(%)
TacAir-1 (VAL, VAM, VF)	585	25
TacAir-2 (VAW, VAQ, VS)	254	11
VP	448	20
Helo	799	31
Other (e.g., VC)	267	13

²Morrison, R., & Cook, T. (1985). Military officer career development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (NPRDC MPL TN 85-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

Measures

An extract of the survey questionnaire is provided in the Appendix. The ADO-specific items are described below. These questions were developed with the assistance of OP-130E2 to help us provide meaningful feedback on the ADO program.

General Interest in an ADO-type Program

Officers were asked, "To what extent would you be interested in remaining in flying billets for the remainder of your career, if, by policy you could not advance beyond CDR?" Respondents answered this question on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = to a small extent to 7 = to a great extent. This item taps an individual's general interest in an "all-flying naval aviator career, regardless of the specific elements of the ADO program.

ADO Program Specific Items

Four items were used to assess pilots' reactions to the main alternatives of an ADO-type program: (1) remaining in one's current plane and mission for a full career, (2) changing aircraft and/or missions, (3) maintaining standard sea/shore tour rotations, and (4) being restricted from any opportunity for squadron command. Specifically, the items asked:

How attractive would a designator change be

if it would allow you to remain in the cockpit, or next to your present airplane, for a full career (including opportunity for promotion to O-6)?

if you were guaranteed to be in the cockpit for a full career, regardless of the type of plane or mission you would be involved with?

if you were expected to maintain a standard sea/shore tour rotation with the change specified above?

if it included division officer and department head duties but did not include any opportunity to command a squadron?

Respondents answered these questions on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very unattractive to 5 = very attractive.

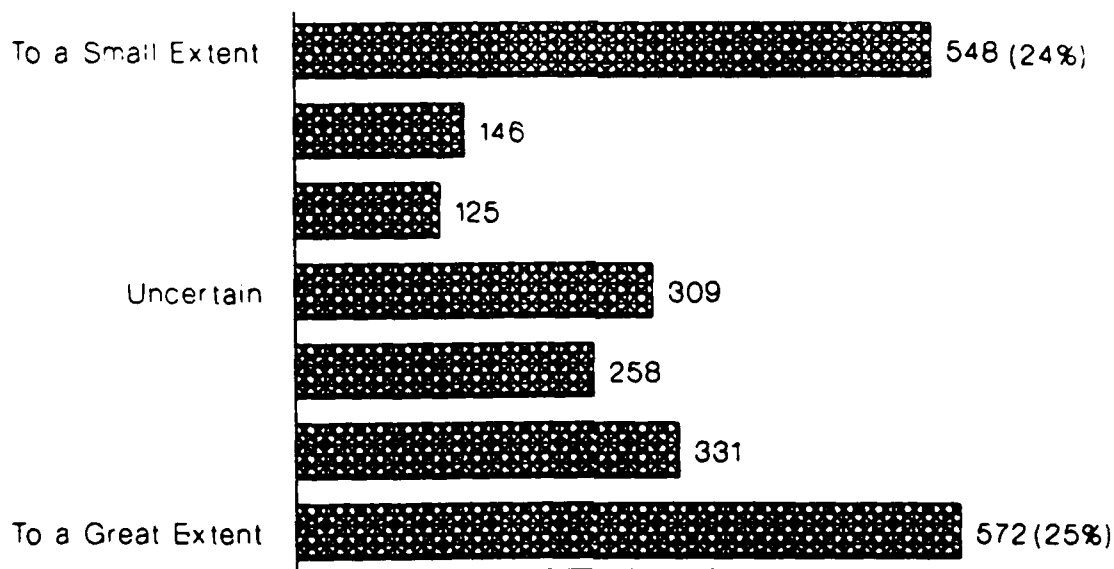
Fitness Report Index

An additional scale, developed from the past eight Fitness Reports (as provided to us by the responding pilots) was an index of officer quality and promotability. This index is described in further detail elsewhere.³ Briefly, this index was based on (1) average officer evaluation score, (2) average number of officers rated lower than the officer being rated, and (3) percentage of times officer was recommended for early promotion.

³Morrison, R., Martinez, C., & Townsend, F. (1984). Officer career development: Description of aviation assignment decisions in the antisubmarine warfare (ASW) patrol community (NPRDC TR 84-31). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

RESULTS

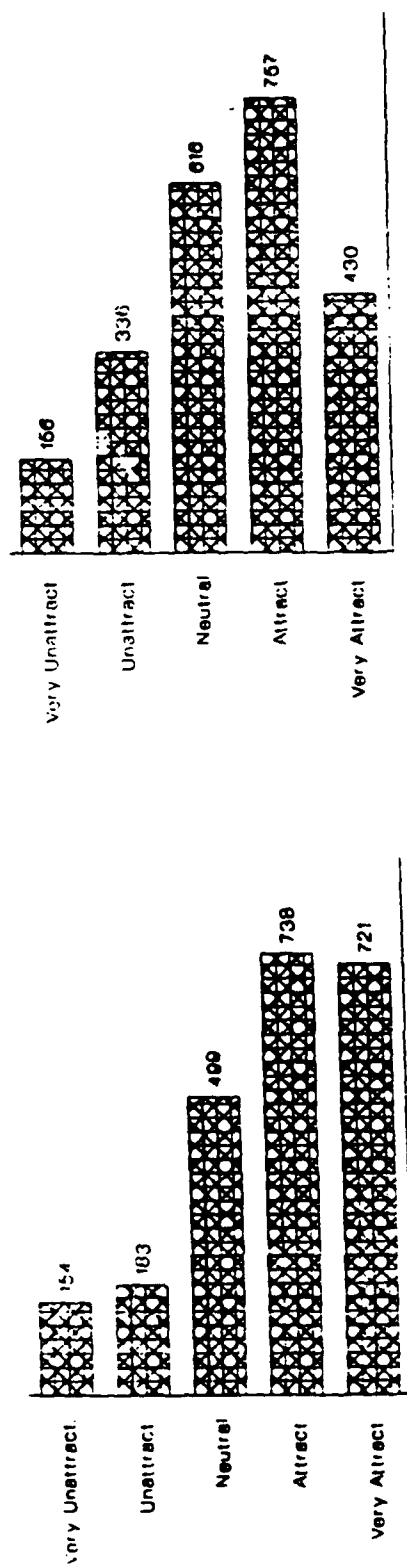
Figures 1 and 2 present the responses of our sample on the five ADO items used in the study. Figure 1 shows that our sample was divided on the attractiveness of an all-flying career. Almost one-fourth of the sample had a very low interest and one-fourth of the sample had a very high interest in such a career. This suggests that the notion of an ADO-type program is fairly controversial with the fleet and at the same time an issue that evokes strong emotions. In a larger sense, this question taps whether an aviator's profession is to be a naval officer first or to be a pilot first. The extreme groups (those with either a very low interest or a very high interest) will be compared on a number of factors later in this report.



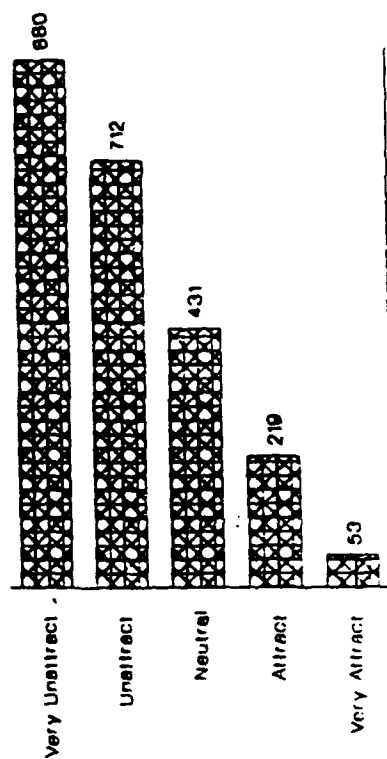
To what extent would you be interested in remaining in flying billets for the remainder of your career, if, by policy you could not advance beyond CDR?

Figure 1. Interest in ADO-type program.

Present Airplane, Full Career



No Opportunity for Command



Standard Sea/Shore Tour Rotation

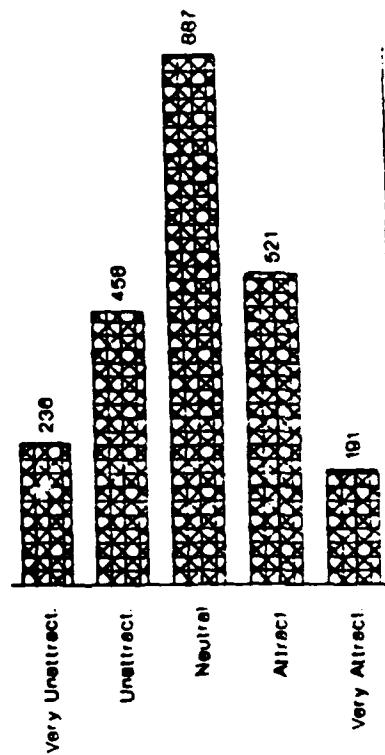


Figure 2. Responses to specific elements of the ADO program.

Figure 2 shows that most pilots (62%) find an all-flying career in their present airplane attractive (i.e., either 4 = attractive or 5 = very attractive). Even if they were required to change planes or missions, more than half of those surveyed (52%) found this type of career attractive. Even with the prospect of maintaining a standard sea/shore tour rotation, most pilots are either neutral or favorable toward the program. Of those who are not neutral (i.e., 3 = neither attractive nor unattractive) toward the prospect of standard sea/shore tour rotations, we found approximately the same number who favored this type of career path (31%) as those who found this type of career path unattractive (30%) (i.e., either 2 = unattractive or 1 = very unattractive). Therefore, even with the sea/shore rotation requirement, this program is still acceptable to 70 percent of the sample. However, there is a large drop in the desirability of the ADO program when the opportunity to command is taken away. Only 12 percent of the pilots in the sample find such a career path attractive, whereas, 69 percent of our sample found this limitation unacceptable.

Question: Do officers of different grades perceive the ADO program differently?

Answer: LTs, LTJGs, and ENSs are similarly interested in remaining in flying billets for a full career ($F = .97$, ns) (Figure 3). Officers beyond LT, however, are significantly less interested in such a career path ($F = 40.8$, $p < .001$). One might ask if individuals interested in all-flying careers are those who resign from the Navy after MSR. If this were the case, we would expect to see a steep decline in desirability of such a career path at the LCDR level and above. The data do not show this trend.

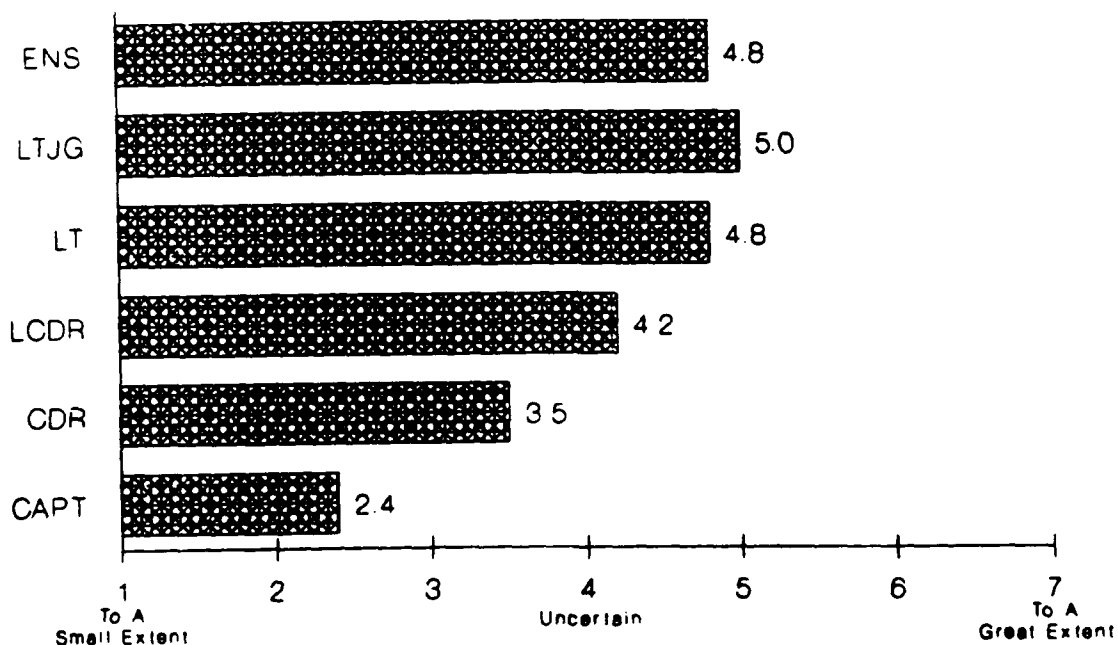


Figure 3. Mean interest in ADO-type program by grade.

This conclusion can be further supported by looking at the responses of the 47 pilots (LTs and LCDRs) who resigned during 1987 and comparing their responses to the responses of pilots of similar grades who have remained in the Navy. Table 2 provides a comparison of the mean responses from these leavers and stayers. There is no substantive difference between the groups in their interest in an all-flying Navy career ($F = 2.4$, ns). This also holds for their evaluation of the specifics of the ADO program: (1) present airplane ($F = 1.9$, ns), (2) different airplane ($F = .13$, ns), (3) standard sea/shore rotation ($F = .98$, ns), and (4) no command opportunity ($F = .24$, ns). This effect of grade does not appear to be because those officers interested in all-flying careers resign--leaving only those officers not as interested in all-flying careers in the Navy. Though not conclusive, these data indicate that as pilots become LCDRs they start to gain additional leadership responsibilities and their career interests begin to extend beyond only flying.

Table 2
Mean Responses of Stayers and Leavers

Item	Leavers (N = 47)	Stayers (N = 1,184)
General interest in ADO-type program	4.9	4.5
Present airplane, full career	3.6	3.8
Different airplane, full career	3.5	3.5
Standard sea/shore tour rotation	2.8	3.0
No opportunity for command	2.2	2.1

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of CAPTs, all pilots reacted in similar fashion to the specifics of the ADO program. The program was viewed as acceptable (i.e., mean greater than 3) until opportunity to command was eliminated (Figure 4). Although all officers (grades O-1 to O-5) found this facet of the program less than acceptable, CDRs were significantly less satisfied ($F = 13.5$, $p < .001$).

Question: Are the targeted aviation communities finding the program attractive?

Answer: To answer this question completely, we need to know what the targeted communities are. The targeted communities, however, have never been made clear by policy. One possibility is that pilots in carrier-based communities, particularly attack (VAL, VAM) and fighter (VF), are those for whom the program was most intended. These communities might have been the implicit focal point, to some extent, because of their lower retention levels. Another possibility, however, is that this program is aimed at non-carrier-based aviation. This would be because if pilots from these communities were sent to training and fleet support squadrons, there would not be a drain from already critically short carrier-based communities.

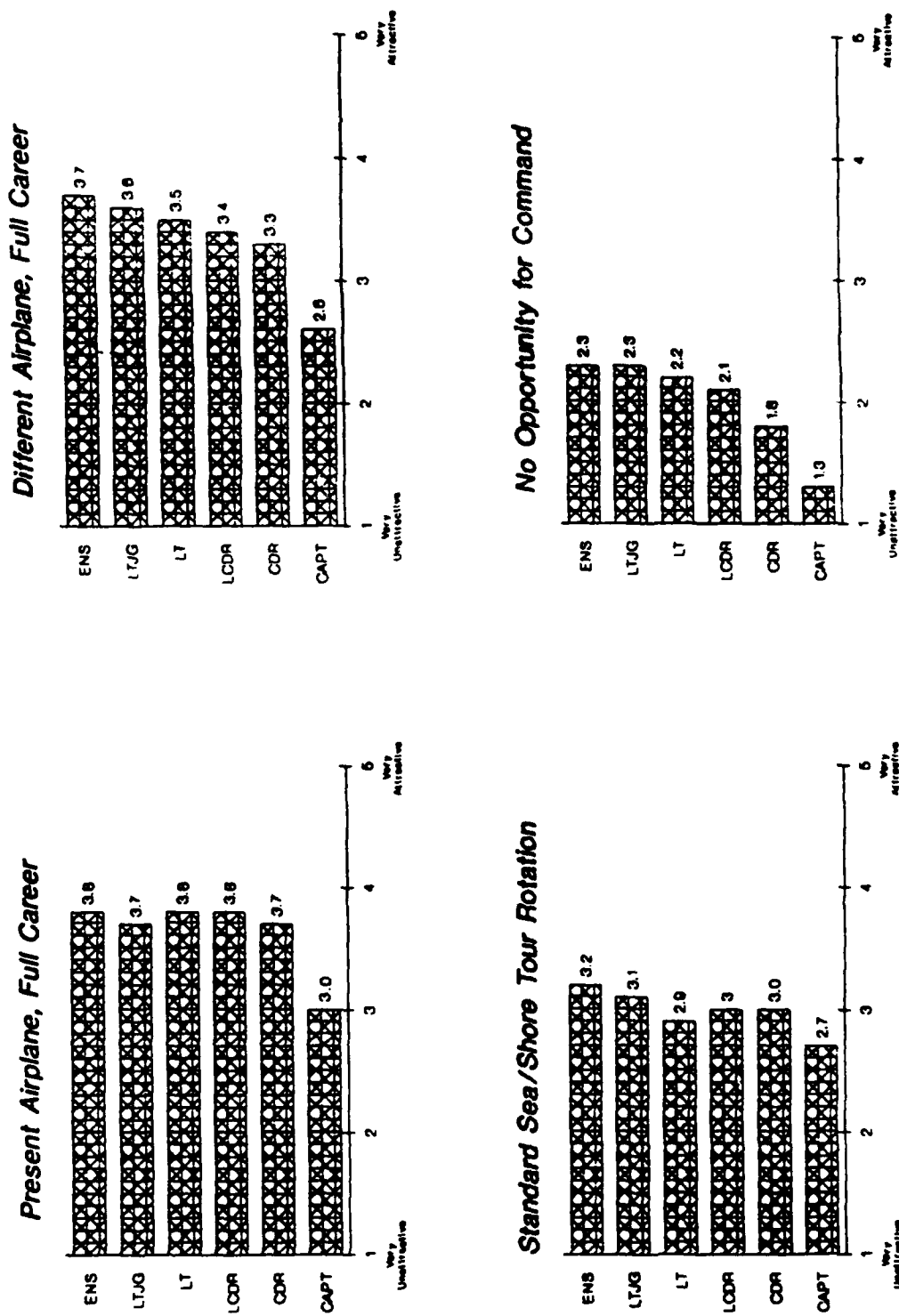


Figure 4. Mean responses to specific elements of the ADO program by grade.

While pilots in all communities expressed a general interest in an ADO-type program (Figure 5), those in fleet support squadrons (e.g., VC) tended to be slightly more interested. On the other hand, pilots in VAL, VAM, and VF squadrons were the least attracted to the ADO program ($F = 5.05, p < .001$).

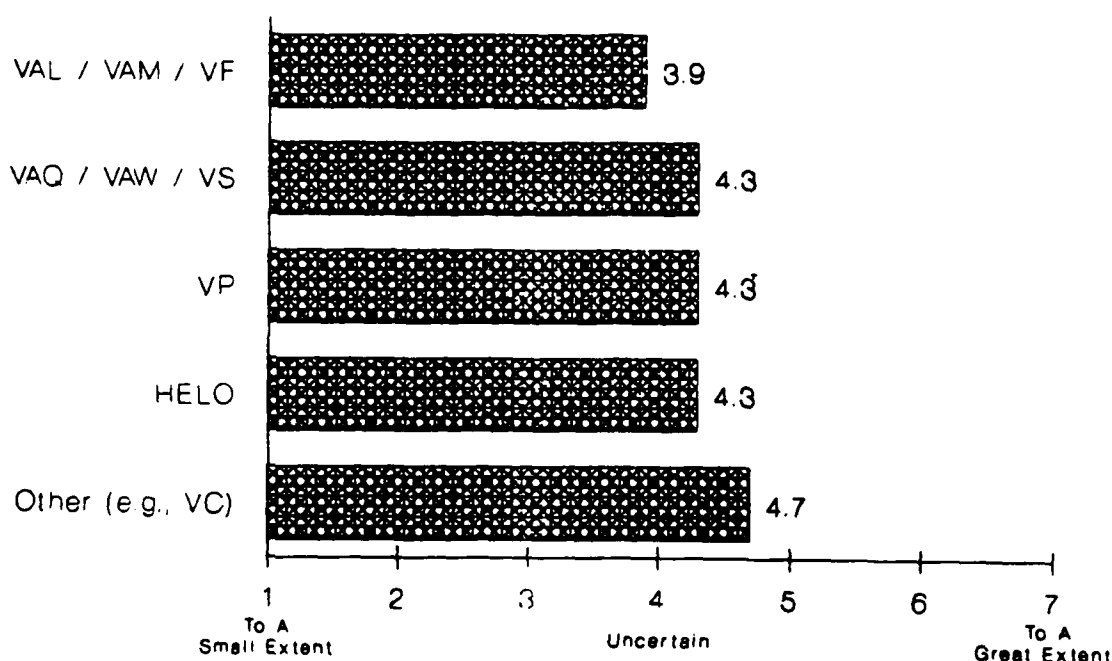


Figure 5. Mean interest in ADO-type program by aviation subcommunity.

The unattractiveness of the ADO program to fighter and attack pilots seems primarily to be due to their concern over changing aircraft and/or mission (Figure 6). Whereas, pilots in the other communities reacted in similar fashion to the four specifics of the program, attack and fighter pilots found the possibility of a plane or mission change comparatively more unacceptable than pilots in the other aviation communities ($F = 20.0, p < .001$). This difference in attitudes remained as the additional ADO program elements of sea/shore rotations ($F = 12.6, p < .001$) and no command opportunity ($F = 12.4, p < .001$) were considered. The message from fighter and attack pilots seems clear--they do not want to change their planes or missions.

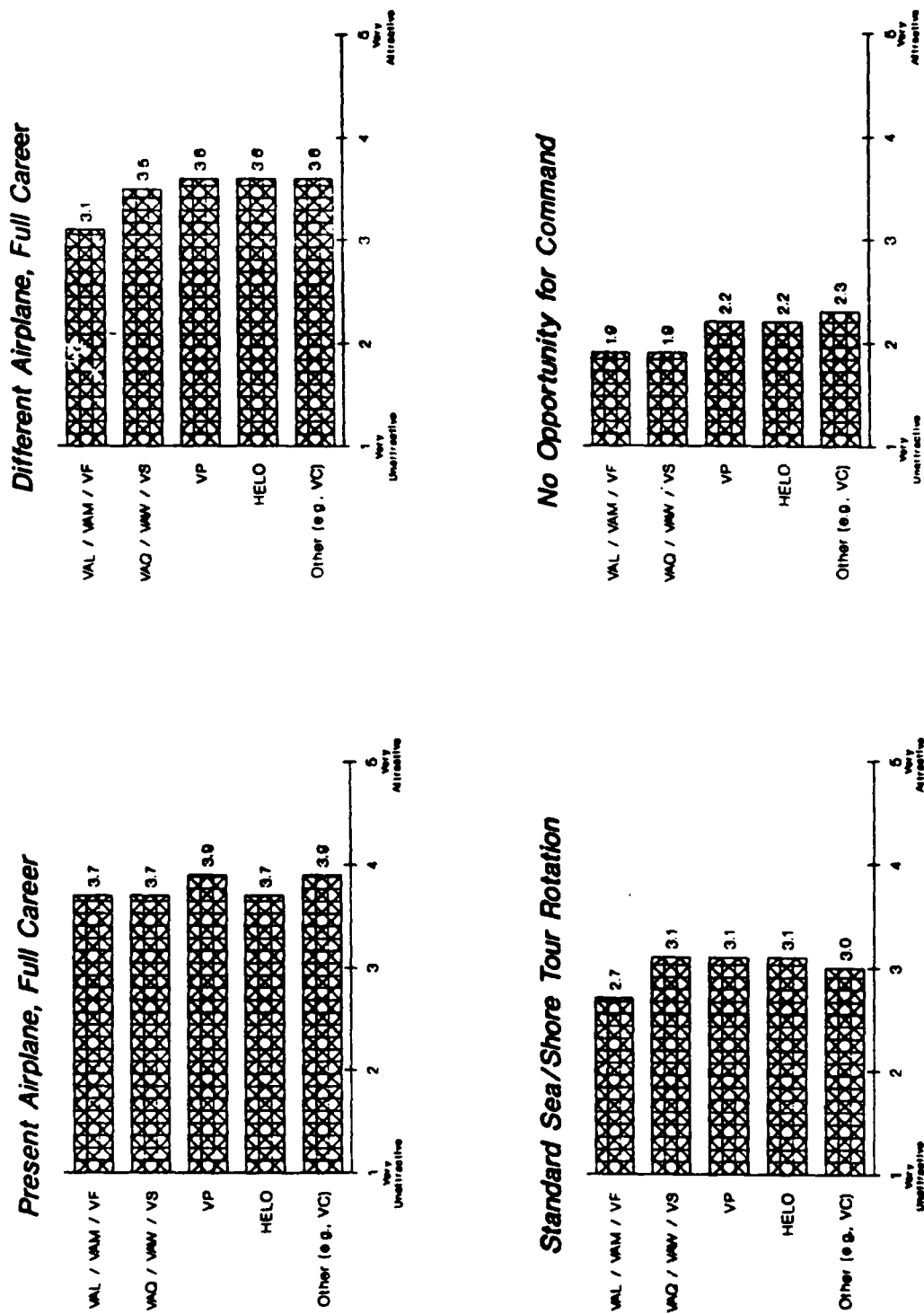


Figure 6. Mean responses to specific elements of the ADO program by aviation subcommunity.

Question: Does this program also interest naval flight officers (NFOs)? That is, if they were allowed to transfer to the ADO program, would they react to the program as pilots do?

Answer: This analysis draws from the complete sample of pilots and NFOs who participated in the 1986 aviation study. This sample included 1,402 NFOs. As shown in Figure 7, NFOs find an all-flying career less attractive than do pilots ($F = 14.6, p < .001$). Therefore, if such a program were to be designed for NFOs, we would not expect this program to be an effective retention undertaking. Because of the high retention rates for NFOs, however, an ADO-type program is not necessary.

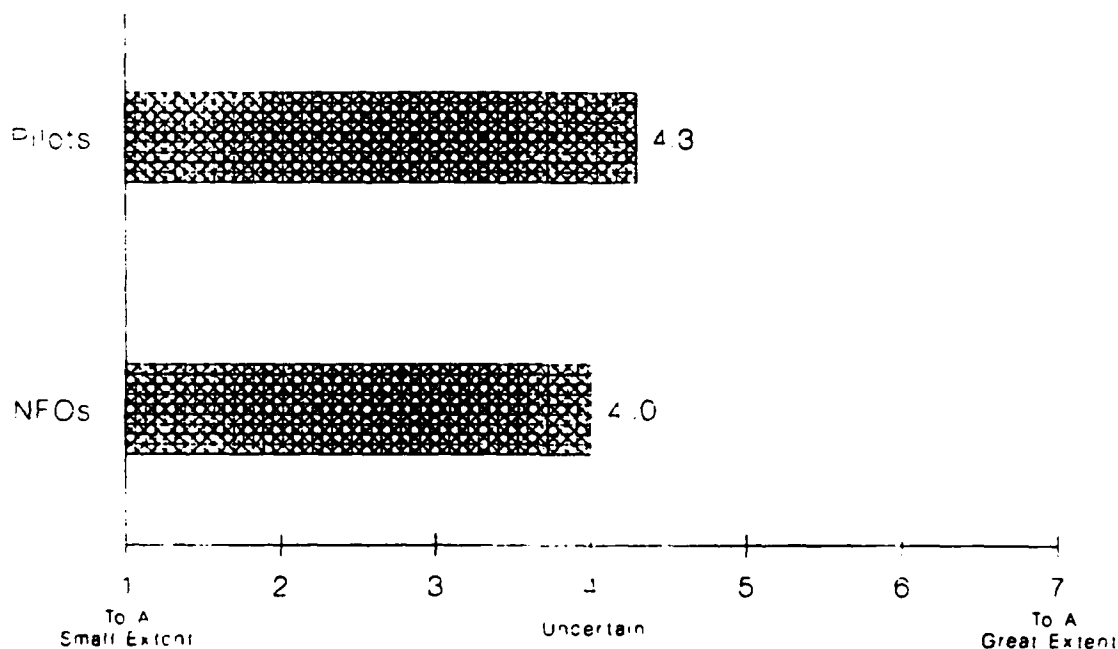


Figure 7. Mean interest in ADO-type program by aviator type.

Question: Are pilots presently in sea (squadron) tours more favorable toward an ADO career than pilots presently in shore assignments?

Answer: This question asks whether pilots presently assigned to squadrons are more reluctant to go to non-DIFOPS billets than those presently in shore assignments. In fact, Figures 8 and 9 show that general interest in the ADO program is equally attractive to officers assigned to sea and shore billets ($F = 1.9, ns$). This also holds true for the specifics of the program: (1) present airplane ($F = .64, ns$), (2) different airplane ($F = .29, ns$), (3) standard sea/shore rotation ($F = .01, ns$), and (4) no command opportunity ($F = .05, ns$). Thus, the program should not be marketed exclusively to officers assigned to sea billets.

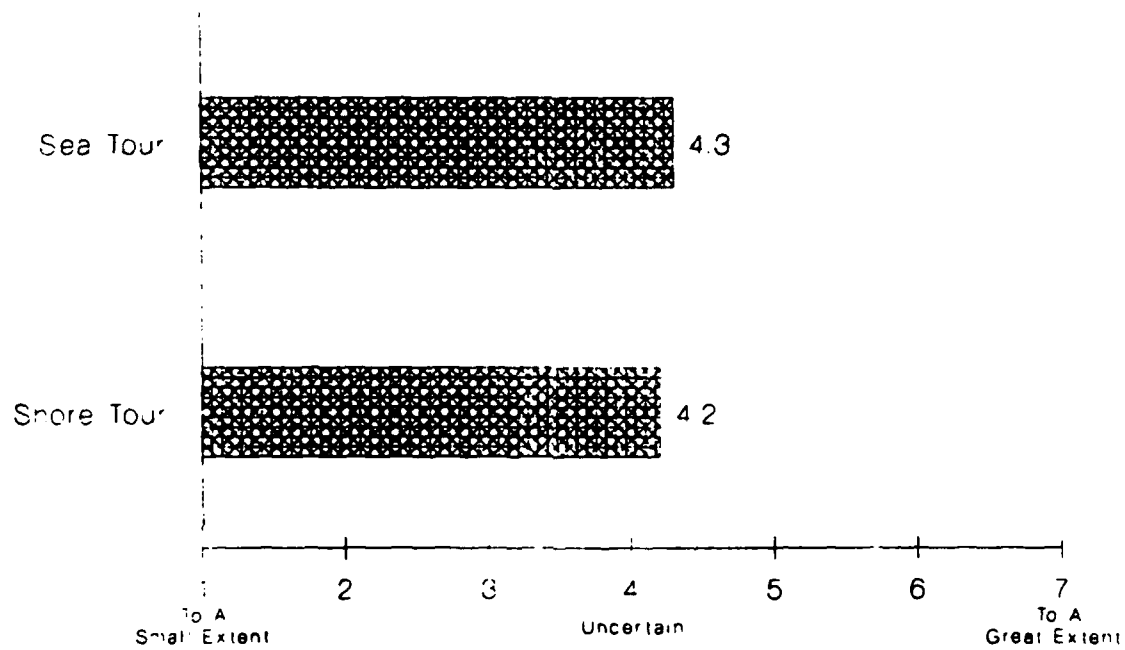


Figure 8. Mean interest in ADO-type program by current tour.

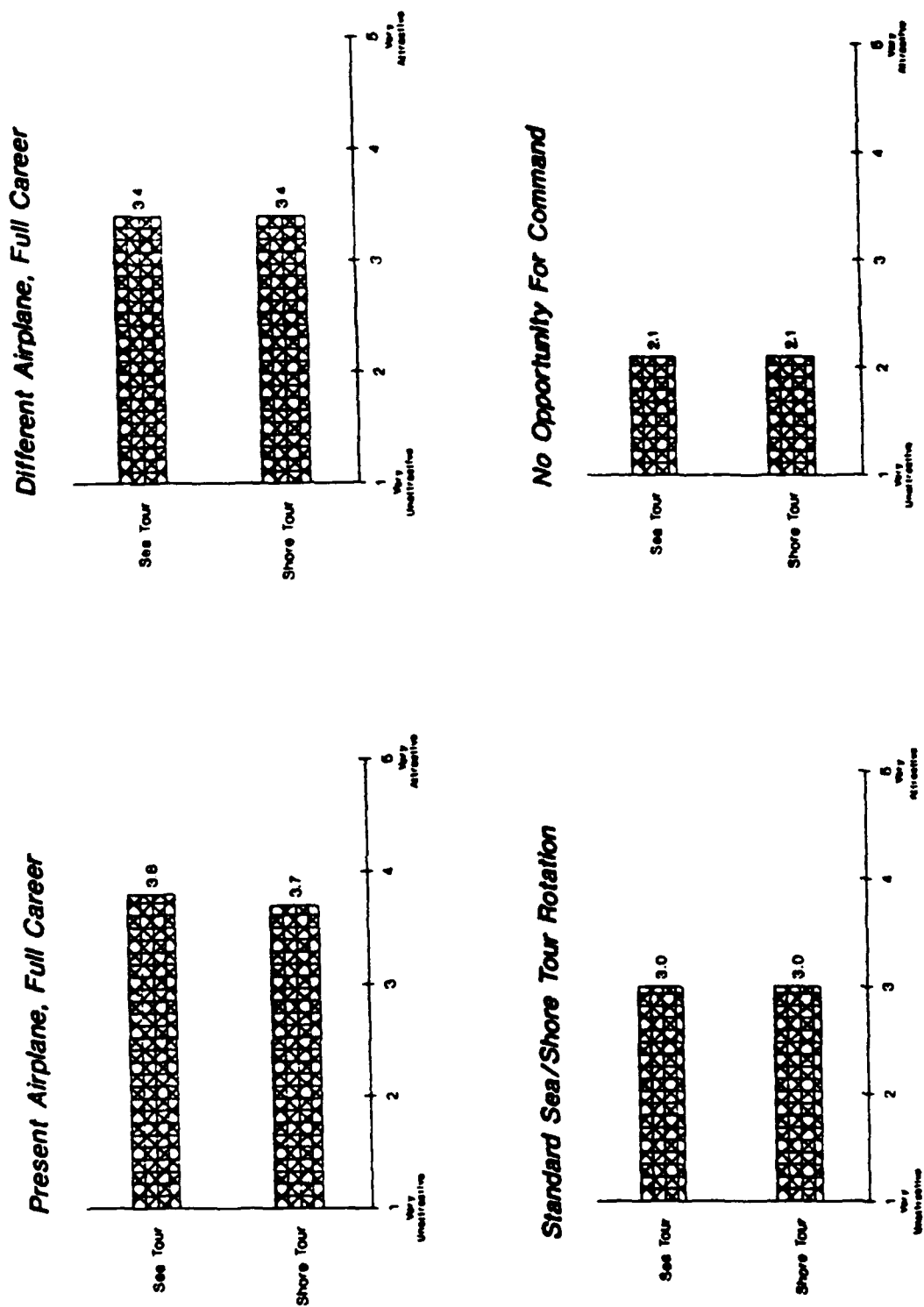


Figure 9. Mean responses to specific elements of the ADO program by current tour.

Question: Do married pilots find the ADO program more attractive than single pilots, perhaps because of the likelihood of increased geographic stability?

Answer: During interviews, some officers said they could see an ADO staying in Beeville, TX to train pilots for the remainder of his or her career. Such a scenario is thought to be more attractive to married officers as a means of gaining geographic stability for their families. Our data can be used to address this possibility. As shown in Figure 10, the data do not support such a conjecture. As far as general interest to remain in flying billets goes, single officers and married officers without children are much more attracted to the ADO program than are pilots who are married and have children ($F = 38.3$, $p < .001$). However, as pointed out earlier, grade has a strong effect on interest in the program and, concurrently, more senior officers are married and have children. Therefore, additional analyses were done by standardizing our five ADO questions within each grade. This was done to eliminate the strong effect that grade has on these responses. The results of these analyses are given in Table 3. As can be seen, there is no significant difference among the three family status groups as far as their general interest in an ADO-type career path is concerned. Although married officers with children are more favorable toward the specifics of the ADO program (actually less negative), there is no clear pattern in the findings once the effect of grade is eliminated ($F = .79$, ns). Therefore, family status does not seem to influence directly interest in the ADO program.

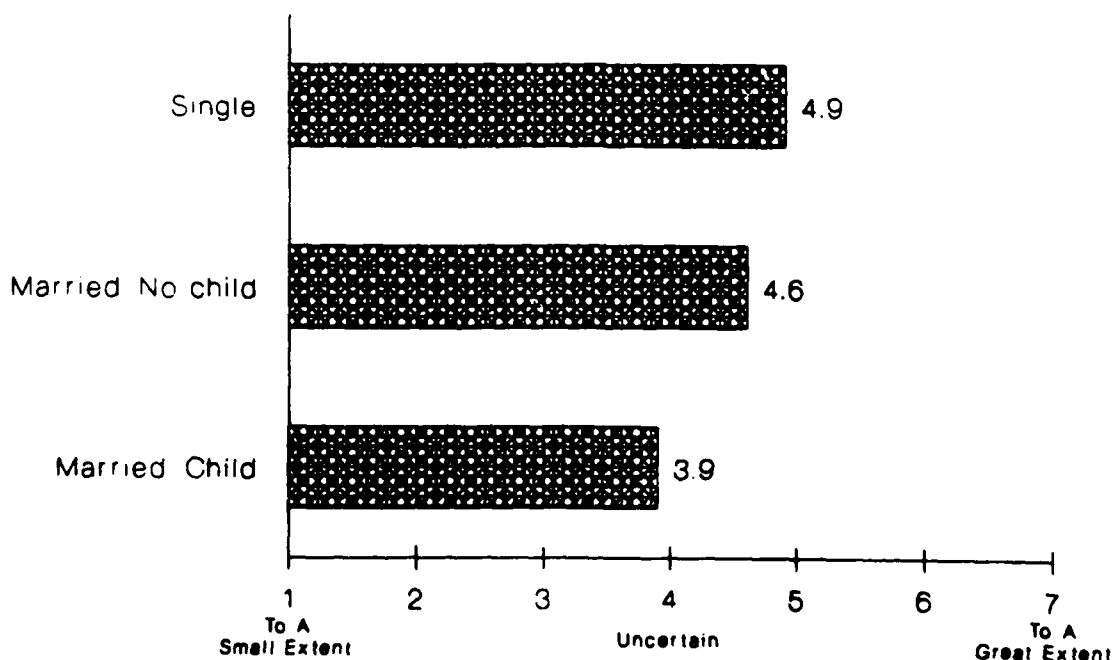


Figure 10. Mean interest in ADO-type program by family status.

Table 3
Comparison by Family Status After Eliminating Grade Effect^a

Item	Single (N = 443)	Married: No Children (N = 447)	Married: Children (N = 1,365)
General interest in ADO-type program	.03	.01	-.04
Present airplane, full career	-.03	-.02	.01
Different airplane, full career	-.02	-.03	.01
Standard sea/shore tour rotation	.05	-.07	.01
No opportunity for command	-.01	-.01	-.01

Note. There were no significant differences ($p < .05$) among the three family status groups on the ADO questions.

^aThese items were standardized within each grade (i.e., mean = 0, standard deviation = 1.0).

Question: Interviews with Navy aviators have revealed the perception that this new community is a career path for fail-selects and less promotable officers. Is this perception supported by our data?

Answer: Fitness report data were provided to us by 1,218 (52% of our sample). As was the case with family status, previous research has demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between grade and fitness report evaluations.⁴ Because of this, the index of promotability (FitRep Index) based on previous fitness reports was standardized within each grade.

Table 4 presents a comparison of perceptions of the ADO program for officers rated "Pack-Minus" (lower 20% of FitRep Index), those rated "Pack" (middle 60%), and those rated "Pack-Plus" (upper 20%). These results indicate that less promotable pilots (i.e., Pack-Minus) have a greater general interest in the ADO program ($F = 11.6, p < .001$) and find the specifics of the ADO program more attractive: (1) present airplane ($F = 7.1, p < .001$), (2) different airplane ($F = 9.4, p < .001$), (3) standard sea/shore rotation ($F = 1.7, ns$), and (4) no command opportunity ($F = 24.1, p < .001$).

⁴Bjerke, D., Cleveland, J., Morrison, R., & Wilson, W. (1987). Officer fitness report evaluation study (NPRDC TR 88-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

Table 4
Comparison Based on Promotability

Item	Pack-Minus (N = 259)	Pack (N = 736)	Pack-Plus (N = 223)
General interest in ADO-type program	4.5 ^a	3.8	3.7
Present airplane, full career	3.9 ^a	3.6	3.7
Different airplane, full career	3.6 ^a	3.3	3.3
Standard sea/shore tour rotation	3.1	3.0	2.9
No opportunity for command	2.1 ^a	1.9	1.8

^aPack-Minus officers are significantly more attracted to the ADO program ($p < .001$).

However, of those pilots who participated in our 1986 survey and subsequently transferred to the ADO community during 1987 (N = 24: 7 LTs, 10 LCDRs, 7 CDRs), only four had been "passed over" for promotion to the next highest grade. This percentage of fail selects (17%) is not meaningfully different from that of the aviation community in general (14%). Therefore, although less promotable officers are more interested in the ADO community, the designation transfer board has done well in maintaining the quality of officers selected as ADOs.

Question: Are there any other factors that help us to understand who the pilot is who has a high interest in remaining in all-flying billets for a full career?

Answer: Further analyses compared the two extreme groups on the question assessing general interest in an ADO-type program. Figures 11 through 15 demonstrate that when compared with pilots with a low interest in the ADO program, pilots with a high interest in the program: (1) are more likely to be from reserve sources (AOCS, NROTC contract) ($\Phi = 0.16$; $X^2 = 25.2$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), (2) are less satisfied with their present aircraft ($\Phi = 0.27$; $X^2 = 65.1$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), (3) are less likely to strive for command of a squadron ($\Phi = 0.30$; $X^2 = 82.0$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), (4) find the prospect of Washington, DC headquarters tours more unattractive ($\Phi = 0.49$; $X^2 = 190.5$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), and (5) have a greater desire to strive for geographic stability ($\Phi = 0.14$; $X^2 = 16.5$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$).

Finally, when these two groups were compared on a measure of intent to remain in the Navy until eligible for retirement (ENS through LCDR), we found no significant difference ($F = 1.5$, ns). Officers who are interested in the ADO program express career intent similar to that of officers not interested in the program.

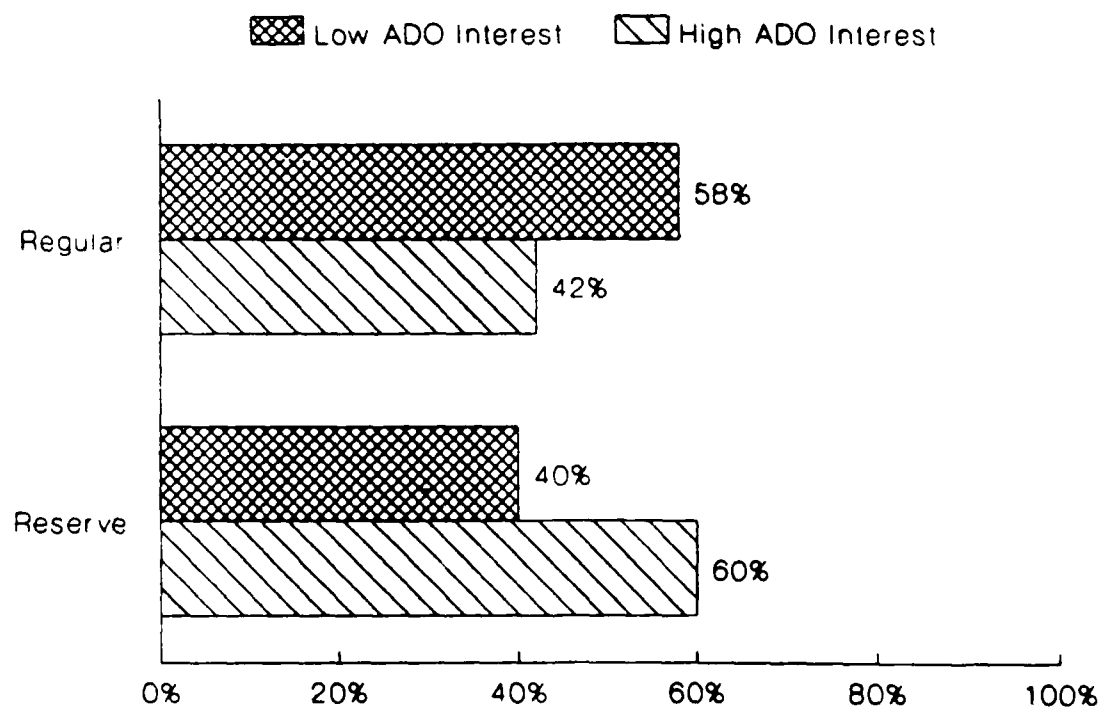


Figure 11. Commissioning sources by ADO interest groups.

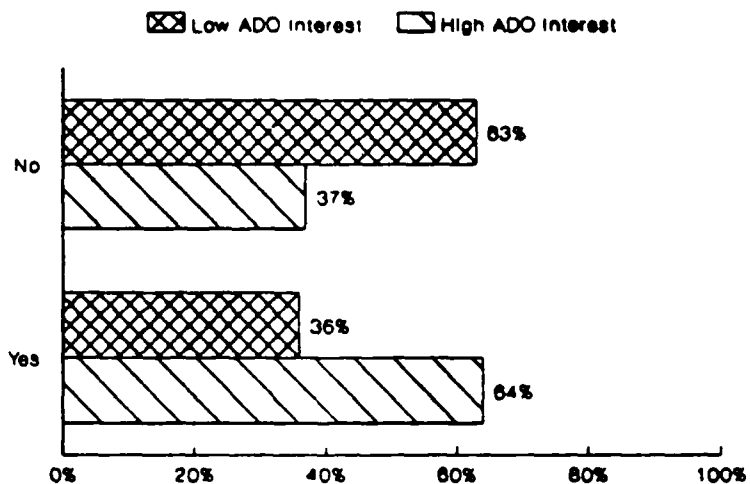


Figure 12. Decision to qualify for different aircraft by ADO interest groups.

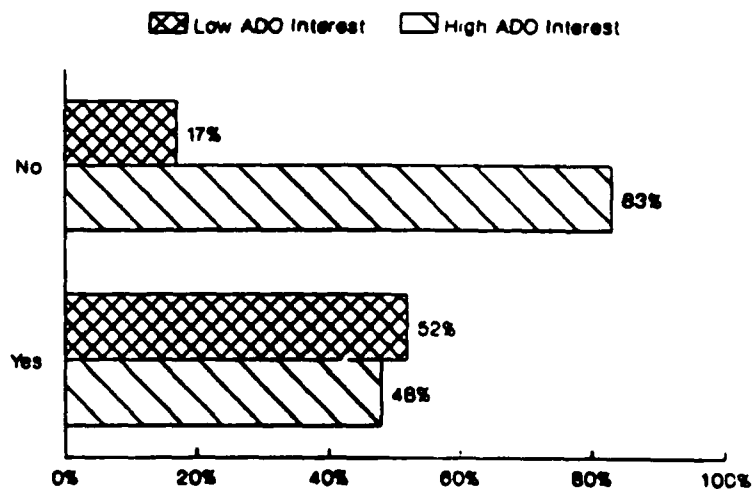


Figure 13. Decision to strive for squadron command (ENS through LCDR) by ADO interest groups.

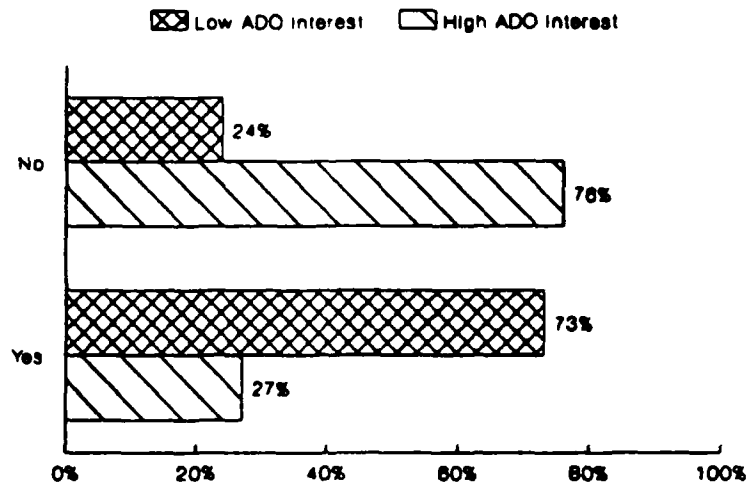


Figure 14. Decision to accept a Washington, DC headquarters assignment by ADO interest groups.

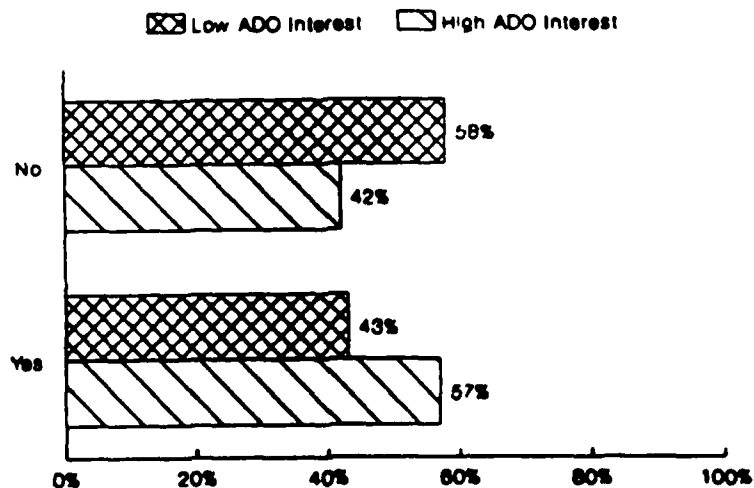


Figure 15. Decision to strive to remain geographically stable by ADO interest groups.

CONCLUSIONS

Will the ADO program be successful as a retention initiative, particularly for TacAir pilots? This is the larger question that looms over any evaluation of this program. It appears that the ADO program has had little influence on the retention of highly promotable pilots. Furthermore, those pilots who are most interested in the program tend to be from fleet support squadrons. Such officers may find the prospect of continuing their present type of flying assignments attractive. It is also possible that these pilots see the ADO program as a means to transition to a different aircraft that is more congruent with their desires. Nonetheless, pilots who want to continue flying for a full career and remain stable geographically are those most attracted to this career path. Finally, the decision to exclude NFOs from transferring to this restricted line community appears to be well grounded. From a retention standpoint, there is no present need to offer NFOs this option and there does not appear to be overwhelming interest in the program among NFOs.

Although careful selection of ADOs appears to have occurred, the program currently is not attractive to the most promotable pilots. Our analyses suggest that this is due to the removal of the opportunity to command. For the ADO program to be a successful retention effort, however, it must attract those high quality pilots that the Navy wants to retain. This is particularly important since many of these officers will fill the crucial positions of trainers and role models for our future aviators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that OP-130E2 and OP-591:

1. Develop additional leadership responsibilities for ADOs in lieu of actual command opportunities.
2. Build in assurances to fighter and attack pilots that within the ADO program they can remain in DIFOPS billets with their present aircraft.
3. Define the overarching mission of this career path and its targeted population.
4. Clarify how the ADO community meshes with the rest of naval aviation.
5. Communicate the opportunities and limitations of the ADO program throughout the aviation community.

APPENDIX
AVIATION OFFICER CAREER QUESTIONNAIRE
(EXTRACT)

General Interest in ADO-Type Program.

To what extent would you be interested in remaining in flying billets for the remainder of your career, if, by policy you could not advance beyond CDR?

To a small
extent

Uncertain

To a great
extent

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

ADO Program Specific Items.

How attractive would a designator change be...

- a. if it would allow you to remain in the cockpit, or next to your present airplane, for a full career (including opportunity for promotion to O-6)?
- b. if you were guaranteed to be in the cockpit for a full career, regardless of the type of plane or mission you would be involved with?
- c. if you were expected to maintain a standard sea/shore tour rotation pattern with the change specified in item b?
- d. if it included division officer and department head duties but did not include any opportunity to command a squadron?

Very
Unattractive

Unattractive

Neither Attractive
Nor Unattractive

Attractive

Very
Attractive

①

②

③

④

⑤

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